SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

STIPENDS REPORT

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SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER STIPENDS REPORT

On February 10, 2004, the Minister of Education appointed Lloyd Gillis and Stewart McInnis to make inquiries and prepare a report respecting the remuneration to be paid to and the reimbursement for expenses incurred by members of school boards pursuant to Section 54(2) of the Education Act for the four year period 2004 -2008.

SCOPE OF REVIEW

In preparation of this report, the appointees reviewed the following:

(a) the Coopers-Lybrand report of July 25, 1997, and the Joe MacEachern report of September 20, 2000; and
(b) the School Board Members Stipends and Expenses Submission (February 2004) prepared by the NSSBA.

All school Board Chairs were given the opportunity to comment on the recommendations included in the NSSBA submission and to raise topics related to the subject of remuneration but not covered by the submission, of particular concern: the requirement within the Education Act for Board Members to participate in school discipline committee appeals, a role currently without additional remuneration despite the demands, both in time and dedication, required.

Information was reviewed concerning the remuneration of comparable groups; i.e. elected municipal officials of Nova Scotia and School Board members (trustees) from other provinces.

Meetings were held with the Executive Director of the NSSBA and the Deputy Minister of Education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The current rates of Nova Scotia School Board Member stipends were set in 1997 and there has been no change in the level of remuneration since that time. There can be no dispute that the duties of school board members have evolved since amalgamation and are substantial. School boards form an important element of the framework within which public education programs and services are delivered to the 150,000 students of the Province. Their responsibility and authority is clearly articulated in the Education Act, but to understand the role of school board members one needs also to appreciate the pivotal position they occupy relative to students, parents, the electorate, their staff and the Minister of Education. The level of commitment, which is evident, has been increasing in accordance with a number of complex issues and responsibilities accepted or imposed on boards.

A review of all reports previously filed indicates that the essential ingredient in the decision of members to offer themselves as representatives on school boards is one of community service. The Coopers and Lybrand report on School Board Member stipends in 1997 included, in their exhaustive investigation of the subject, numerous Board Member interviews through which they explored what it was that motivated citizens of our Province to offer for School Board election. They concluded that, "the level of stipend should not be the major attraction to a member of the community when this individual assessment to serve or not to serve is taken" and that "the primary (but not the only) reward to a life of service to the public, in this case as an elected member of the School Board, is the opportunity to serve the public, to contribute to the resolution of problems and to improve the level of education of our youth". The authors of the 2004 report concur with this assessment, also believing that remuneration reflecting value for time spent be a significant component of the reward.

While it was noted that some provinces do not have any remuneration for School Board Members (New Brunswick and Newfoundland), and that various boards and commissions within Nova Scotia pay minimum or honorary stipends, it is the opinion of the appointees to this report that School Board members in our province deserve a level of remuneration in recognition of, and commensurate with, their tremendous contributions to education in Nova Scotia. While it is not feasible to adopt in whole the recommendations as presented by the NSSBA, it is the belief of those appointed to assess the present situation that the following recommendations reflect the spirit of their position, at the same time bearing in mind the reality of fiscal responsibility.

1. It is recommended that effective November 2004, the stipends received by school board members be increased as follows:

	Present Stipend	Recommended Stipend
Member	$7200	$8200
Chair	$12000	$13500
Vice Chair	$9000	$10000

2. For the expenditures they incur in the fulfillment of their duties, school board members should be reimbursed according to the following payment schedule.

- Travel expense reimbursed using the Provincial vehicle allowance rate.
- The per diem maximum for meals allowed $40. (Breakfast $8, lunch $12, dinner $20)

3. School board members are encouraged to participate in workshops, meetings and conferences that have been designed to increase their effectiveness. Currently each board member is allotted an amount of $1600 to support their attendance at such events. However, because most of these occur in Halifax, the cost of attendance varies dramatically and many board members must either curtail their attendance or bear personal responsibility for the expenditure. It is recommended that the allocation for this activity be increased and that the distance from Halifax of the school board central office be reflected in the board member allowance.

School Board	Allowance per Member
AVRSB	$1600
HRSB	$1600
CRSB	$1600
SSDB	$1600
TCDB	$1900
SDSB	$1900
CSAP	$1900
CBRSB	$2200

4. It is recommended that the supplementary allotment of $10000 per school board, to further support board member development be maintained.

CONCLUSION

Given the contribution School Board Members make to the public education system and the time which has elapsed since their stipends have been increased, the authors of this report believe that the recommended increases in Board Member stipends and remuneration are appropriate. It is evident that demands made upon School Boards are increasing and to meet those demands and assure that the public expectations for the delivery of education of the highest quality are met, individuals from a broad cross section of the community should be encouraged to seek election to this important public office. The educational achievement of our students garners a great deal of attention through the provincial media but it is the attention that it gets in the board room which can have a direct impact on school practice and student outcome. It is critically important therefore that persons elected to this office are informed individuals willing and prepared to engage in the debate.

Respectfully submitted,